

PROBLEMS WITH SUBJECT ACCESS TO INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE

CaMMS Forum: Working Within and Going Beyond:
Approaches to Problematic Terminology or Gaps in Established
Vocabularies

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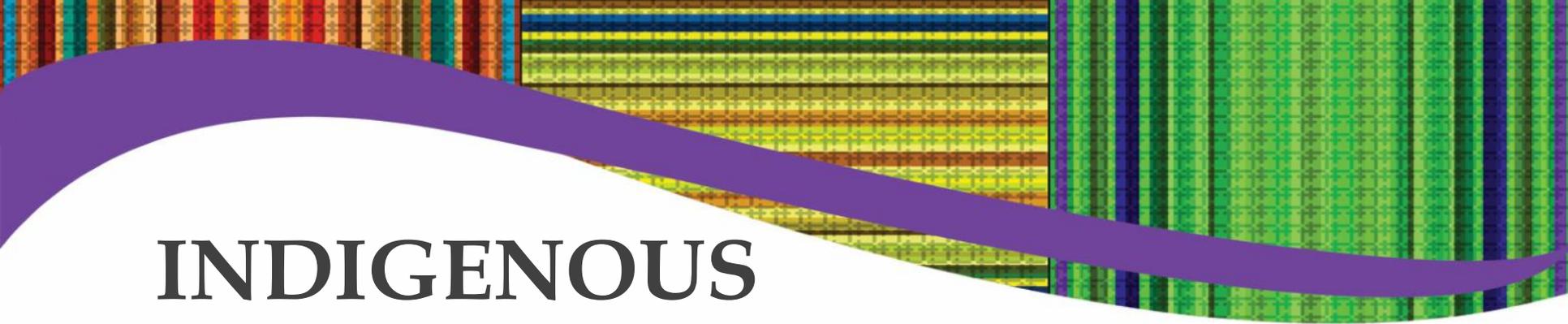


KOSs IN LIBRARIES

- Knowledge organization systems (KOSs) must be adapted to the users. They include:
 - vocabularies
 - classification schemes

- *Universal KOSs* are commonly used in US libraries
- Reliable subject access must also be available for indigenous (marginalized) people. However:

Indigenous knowledge may not exist in dominant cultures and therefore may not be describable by universal KOSs used in libraries.



INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE (IK)

“The understandings, skills and philosophies developed by societies with long histories of interaction with their natural surroundings. For rural and indigenous peoples, local knowledge informs decision-making about fundamental aspects of day-to-day life. This knowledge is integral to a cultural complex that also encompasses language, systems of classification, resource use practices, social interactions, ritual, and spirituality.”

United Nations

http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/5session_factsheet1.pdf



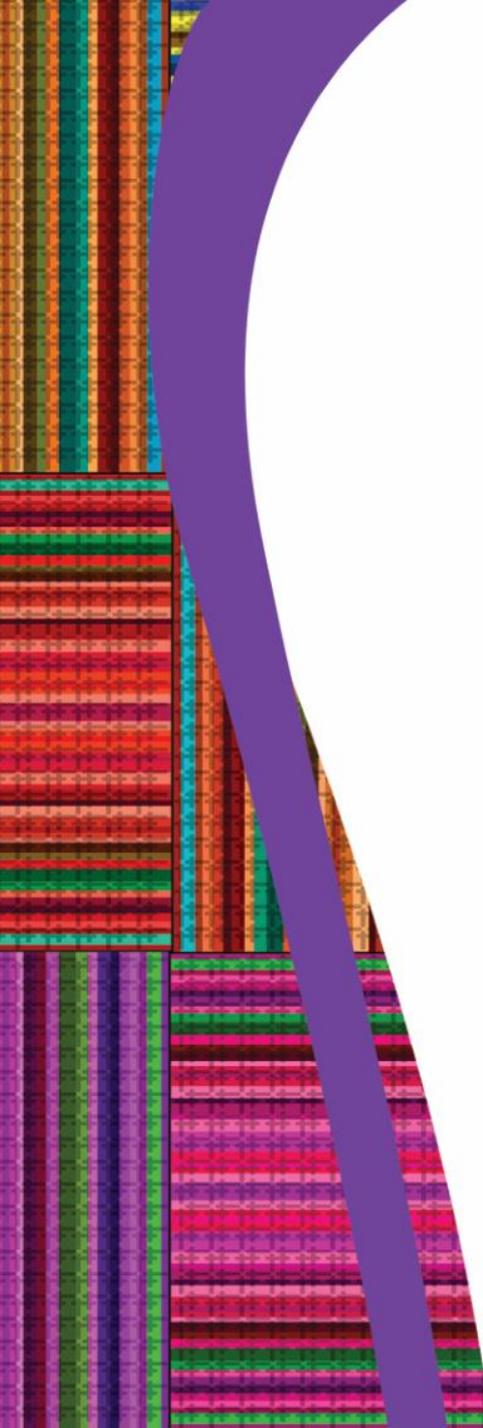
INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

- “[T]here is no universally accepted definition of indigenous peoples.”
 - Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations
<http://www.fao.org/indigenous-peoples/en/>
- Indigenous communities must:
 - be pre-colonial
 - maintain a strong link to the land, and
 - hold “distinct social, economic or political systems...and language, culture, and beliefs.”
 - United Nations
http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/5session_factsheet1.pdf



LIBRARIES AND THE WESTERN MAINSTREAM BIAS

- “All major classification schemes are built on clearly identifiable systems of knowledge, and all classification schemes, as discursive formations, regulate the ways in which knowledge is made accessible.”
 - Pauline Rafferty (2001, p. 182)
- “Metadata creators must possess awareness of their own historical, cultural, racial, gendered, and religious worldviews, and work at identifying where those views exclude other human experiences. Understanding inherent bias in metadata standards is considered a core competency for all metadata work.”
 - CaMMS Core Competencies (2017, p. 1)



COGNITIVE JUSTICE AND LIS

“[T]rends to reject the language of universal human rights as following an unrealistic and particularly Western notion, and seeks to replace that language with autonomy, dignity, and a ‘commons’ approach to cultural authority...the object is...to promote healing and forgiveness by removing the continued burden of colonialism and legacy thinking.”

-- John Burgess (2015, slide 3)

KOSs should:

- *make sense and be usable by indigenous people*
- *be devised that present inclusive solutions.*

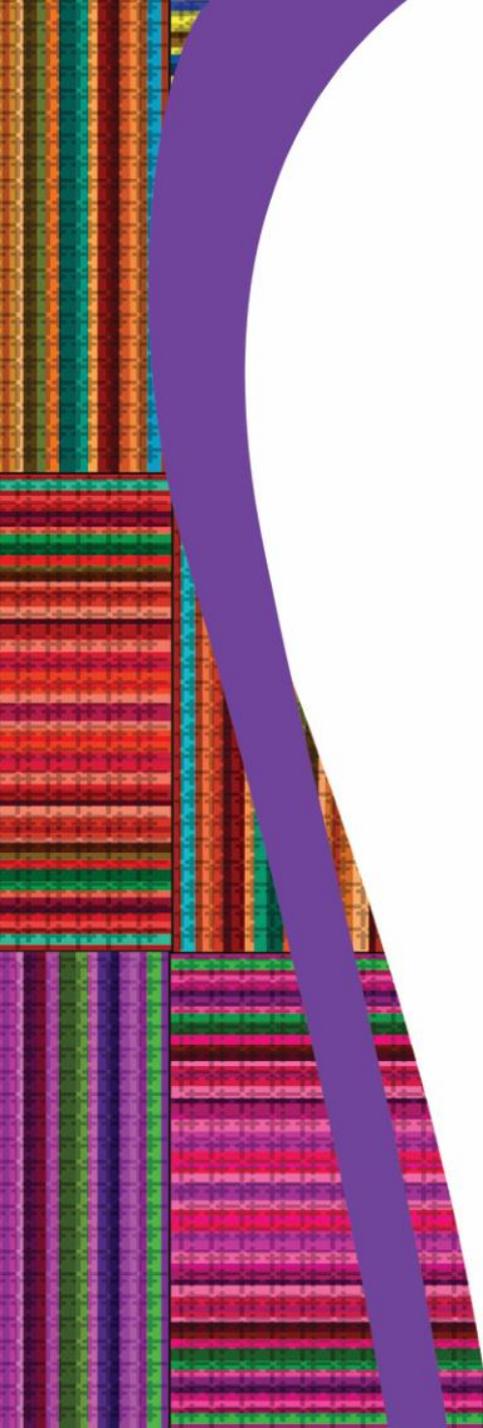


LITERARY WARRANT

- The practice of deriving the “vocabulary of a subject language...from the literature it is intended to describe.”
-- Elaine Svenonious (2000, p. 135)
- Using literary warrant as the basis for a vocabulary will lead to the marginalization of the IK that will not be represented

“What does it say to a child, when all of the categories in a system seem to accentuate what is not yours, while all the practices and wisdom of your culture are relegated to a tiny sliver of space? What is it like to grow up in a world where unfamiliar languages are revered, where your mother tongue may be good and useful for everyday life, but is not a vehicle for advancement?”

--Eunice Kua (2004, p. 54)



OTHER KINDS OF WARRANT

- *User warrant*: based on the language of the end-user.
- *Structural warrant*: provides hierarchical linkages where there is no other warrant.
- *Indigenous warrant*: terms and potentially classification structures are derived from the worldview of the indigenous peoples themselves, not from the dominant cultures who write about them or who search for information about them.

--Ann M. Doyle, Kimberley Lawson, and Sarah Dupont (2015)



INDIGENOUS CONCERNS IN LCSH

- Ex 1: Canada: LCSH uses Lillooet, whereas *indigenous warrant* prefers Stl'atl'imx.

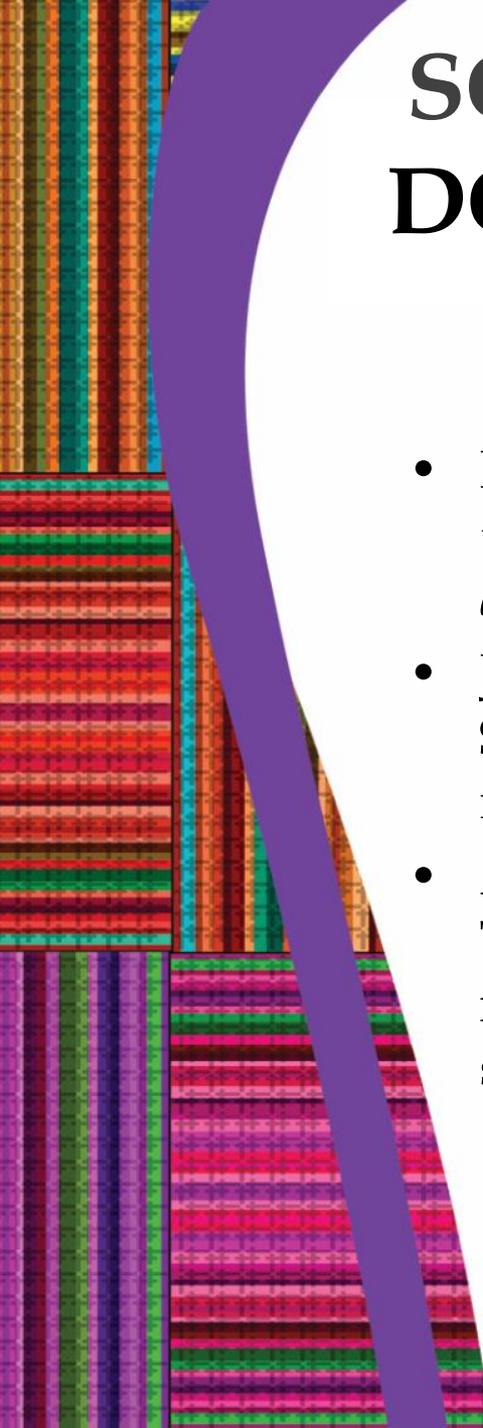
- Doyle et al. (2015)
- Ex 2: Indigenous political system of the Cordillera is incompatible; e.g., terms such as *bodong* and *pagta* are not the same as 'peace treaties', 'customary law', or 'dispute resolution'.

- Christina B. Villanueva (2016, p. 12)
- Sanford Berman (1995) advocated using (e.g.):
 - indigenous warrant for tribe names
 - Etc.



COGNITIVELY JUST SOLUTIONS FOR INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE ACCESS

- *A new thesaurus: The Xwi7xwa library's First Nations House of Learning (FNHL) Subject Headings*
 - Doyle et al. (2015)
- *Adaptation of LCSH: Association for Manitoba Archives (replacement/new terms created with indigenous peoples)*
 - Christine Bone (2016)
- *A new metadata schema: A ground-up approach for conceptualizing an entire metadata framework.*
 - Inuvialuit community (Canada)
 - access to digital cultural heritage resources
 - Sharon Farnel et al. (2016)



SOLUTIONS FOR OTHER NON-DOMINANT AND SPECIALIZED GROUPS

- Mustapha Allouh's *Ibn Rushd: Thésaurus arabe-français relatif au Maghreb et à son environnement historico-culturel andalou et africain*
- Juhana Salim, Siti Farhana Mohamad Hashim, and Shahrul Azman Mohamad Noah (2012)'s ontology for multilingual access to authoritative websites on Islam
- ALA's Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Round Table (GLBTRT)'s 2007 compilation that enumerated relevant controlled vocabularies and classification schemes (many are unpublished)
 - E.g.: Lesbian Herstory Archives
(<http://lesbianherstoryarchives.org/tourcoll2.html>)



STEPS FOR CREATING COGNITIVELY JUST KOSs

The groups working to provide specialized subject access have included members of the indigenous or specialized community. These projects:

1. begin by identifying a problem and a need, and by securing funding, support, and partners
2. support the emergence of KOSs that are then tested in collaboration with indigenous and specialized group members
3. implement and re-test KOSs over time, and are ideally published and tested with the community at large, being re-adjusted as necessary

However, not all information agencies will be able to carry out this labor-intensive, three-step process.



LIS EDUCATION AS CAVEAT

- Does LIS education prepare LIS professionals to create specialized KOSs?
 - Joudrey's longitudinal research into Cataloging and IO in LIS programs shows these courses are consistently required
 - Hudon's research suggests that students are learning to apply KOSs rather than to create them
 - *Core Competencies for Cataloging and Metadata Professional Librarians* does not assume KOS creation, only use
- ...and can they even apply them if the context is unfamiliar? (see Villanueva, 2016)



COGNITIVELY JUST SUBJECT ACCESS: MOVING FORWARD

- “[A] mainstream bias may be appropriate in a classification scheme used for a general collection, while a special classification scheme may be more appropriate for a collection of materials for or about a specific group of people.”

--Rebecca Green (2015, p. 212)

- The Internet and online access can:
 - make use of authoritative ontologies (Salim et al., 2012)
 - permit searching across multiple KOSs as long as the KOSs are applied consistently.
 - allow nonhierarchical web-based folksonomies developed as user generated content (UGC).



CONCLUSION

- Cognitive justice and access to IK for indigenous people can and should:
 - be a focus of librarianship, to alleviate the “tunnel vision and blind spots” against which Wayne A. Wiegand warns us as a profession, allowing us to move beyond being a “profession trapped in its own discursive formations, where members speak mostly to each other and where connections between power and knowledge that affect issues of race, class, age, and gender, among others, are either invisible or ignored”
 - Gary Radford (2001, <http://www.theprofessors.net/wiegand.html>)
 - follow from a collaboration between information professionals and indigenous peoples
 - support a focus on “creat[ing] new spaces for Indigenous ontologies to emerge.”
 - Marisa Elena Duarte and Miranda Belarde-Lewis (2015, p. 686)